CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 29 JUNE 1995 FROM THE ACTING HEAD OF THE AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT BY THE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER, THE HONOURABLE P.J. KEATING MP CONCERNING THE RESUMPTION OF NUCLEAR TESTING BY FRANCE

Attached is the text of a statement by the Australian Prime Minister, the Hon. P.J. Keating MP, concerning the resumption of nuclear testing by France.

I would be grateful if you would issue this text as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distribute it to all member States and non-member participants in the work of the CD.

(Signed): Patrick Cole
Counsellor
Acting Head of Delegation

GE.95-62323 (E)

French Nuclear Testing

Statement by the Australian Prime Minister, the Hon. P.J. Keating MP

"Cabinet met last night to consider further Australia's response to President Chirac's announcement on 13 June that France would resume nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

Cabinet's deliberations were against the background of the French rejection of the efforts of the South Pacific Forum delegation, led by Senator Evans, to persuade France not to proceed with the tests.

Australia's response to the French decision has been strong, unequivocal and concrete.

The Government has attacked the decision in very strong terms - first in a statement I issued on 14 June immediately following on President Chirac's announcement deploring the decision. I announced in that statement that the Government had frozen cooperation with France in the defence field. The language of that statement was repeated by the Foreign Minister, in Japan at the time, in a series of press conferences, and in a direct telephone conversation with the French Foreign Minister, Mr. Hervé de Charette. The Acting Foreign Minister called in the French Ambassador and issued a formal protest and our Ambassador did likewise in Paris.

The Government has also taken the lead in promoting a strong South Pacific regional action. On 15 June, I issued a statement as Chair of the Forum condemning the French decision, after consultations with my fellow South Pacific Forum Heads of Government. On 19 June Senator Evans led a delegation of Forum representatives which conveyed direct to the French Government the region's condemnation of the decision and the deep resentment it has aroused in the whole region.

The Government gave instructions to its embassies abroad to make our position known on the French decision. Many countries have expressed their opposition to the tests, including a number of our closest neighbours.

Australia has also made active use of multilateral forums to leave no doubt as to where we stand on this issue. We have expressed our outrage at the French decision in the United Nations in New York, as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

On 19 June I made a speech in Parliament setting out the Government's views on the decision and Australia's relationship with France.

Concerned about flow-on consequences of the French decision, I have instructed our Ambassador in Washington to welcome the continued United States commitment to its moratorium and urge the United States to maintain its leadership in negotiating a comprehensive test-ban treaty (CTBT) in terms acceptable not only to the nuclear-weapon States but the wider international

community. Our Ambassadors in Beijing, London and Moscow will also be making representations to the other nuclear-weapon States in favour of the moratorium on testing and early conclusion of the CTBT.

By any measure this amounts to an unequivocal response. I am in no doubt that the French are clear about our views.

Last night, Cabinet - after hearing a report and recommendations from Senator Evans - decided upon a series of further measures now to be taken and in the light of the outcome of the Forum delegation's visit to France, covering actions at the bilateral, regional and global level. These measures are in line with the Government's consistent policy on this issue which has been to respond in a measured, graduated way, leaving open every avenue from France to respond to South Pacific concerns.

In broad outline the proposed measures are as follows:

- The Government has decided that Australia's Ambassador in Paris is to be recalled for urgent consultations and briefing on how Australia can best continue to react to the French decision.

- The Government has decided to extend the curtailment of defence contacts with France in the areas of ship and aircraft visits, training, senior officer visits, material acquisition, and defence-related agreements and arrangements. The senior Australian defence force representative in Paris will be recalled. (In relation to the curtailment of aircraft visits, the Department of Defence will take the operational steps required to continue to provide the same level of maritime surveillance to the Pacific Island countries.)

- The Government will convene a special meeting of South Pacific Environment Ministers to discuss the environmental impact of testing.

- The Government will be consulting with Forum countries on possible regional measures including the suspension of France's status as a South Pacific Forum dialogue partner for the duration of testing; a possible boycott by individual Forum countries of the South Pacific games to be held in French Polynesia in August; and the formation of a Forum regional action committee to coordinate responses to France's decision, mobilize and support community campaigns in Forum countries, and report to the Madang Forum in September.

- The Government will be consulting with Forum countries on the desirability of a public information campaign being mobilized in France to sensitize public opinion to the strength of regional opposition to French testing and the reasons for it.

- At a wider international level, Australian delegations and representatives will take advantage of all available opportunities to register Australian and regional opposition to French testing in

the United Nations and all other appropriate multilateral bodies, including where appropriate through the initiation of resolutions.

- A high-level officials mission will be sent to nuclear-weapon States to argue the case for an acceptably drafted and quickly negotiated CTBT.

While it is not proposed to embark upon any trade or other direct economic restrictions, it should be noted that the existing policy of entering into no new contracts for the sale of uranium to France until France enters into a comprehensive test-ban treaty will remain in force.

The Government will keep the implementation and impact of the above measures under close review in the months ahead. We are determined to do everything we possibly and reasonably can to ensure that France understands the nature and extent of Australian and South Pacific opposition to its test resumption decision, and acts accordingly.

Canberra, 23 June 1995"